

MAHANAIM, OR HOSTS OF ANGELS

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**A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim.”
Genesis 32:1-2.*

*“And it came to pass, when David was come to Mahanaim, that Shobi the son of Nahash of Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and Machir the son of Ammiel of Lo-debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite of Rogelim, brought beds, and basins, and earthen vessels, and wheat, and barley, and flour, and parched corn, and beans, and lentils, and parched pulse, and honey, and butter, and sheep, and cheese of kine, for David, and for the people that were with him, to eat: for they said, The people is hungry, and weary, and thirsty, in the wilderness.”
2 Samuel 17:27-29.*

LET us go even unto Mahanaim and see these great sights. First, let us go with Jacob and see the two camps of angels, and then with David to observe his troops of friends.

Jacob shall have our first consideration.

What a varied experience is that of God's people! Their pilgrimage is over a shifting sand, their tent is ever moving, and the scene around them ever changing. Here is Jacob at one time contending for a livelihood with Laban, playing trick against trick in order to match his father-in-law, then he prospers, and determines to abide no more in such servitude, he flies, is pursued, debates with his angry relative, and ends the contention with a truce and a sacrifice.

This unseemly family warfare must have been a very unhappy thing for Jacob, by no means tending to raise the tone of his thoughts, or sweeten his temper, or ennoble his spirit. What a change happened to him when the next day, after Laban had gone, Jacob found himself in the presence of angels. Here is a picture of a very different kind, the churl has gone and the cherubs have come, the greedy taskmaster has turned his back and the happy messengers of the blessed God have come to welcome the patriarch on his return from exile. It is hard to realize to the full the complete transformation.

Such changes occur in all lives, but I think most of all in the lives of believers. Few passages across the ocean of life are quite free from storm, but the redeemed of the Lord may reckon upon being tossed with tempest even if others escape. “Many are the afflictions of the righteous.” Yet trials last not forever, clear shining comes after rain. Change works ever. We pass from storm to calm, from breeze to hurricane, we coast the shores of peace, and anon we are driven upon the sandbanks of fear.

Nor need we be surprised, for were there not great changes in the life of our Lord and Master? Is not His life as full of hills and valleys as ours possibly can be? We read of His being baptized in Jordan, and there and then visited by the Spirit, who descended upon Him like a dove—then was His hour of rest. Who can tell the restfulness of Jesus' spirit when the Father bore witness concerning Him, “This is my beloved Son”? But we read directly afterwards, “Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.”

From the descent of the Holy Ghost to dire conflict with the devil is a change indeed! But another change followed it, for when that battle had been fought out, and the triple temptation had been tried upon our Lord in vain, we read again, “Then the devil leaves him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto him.” In a short space our Lord's surroundings had changed from heavenly to diabolical

and again from satanic to angelic. From heaven to the manger, from walking the sea to hanging on the cross, from the sepulcher to the throne—what changes are these! Can we expect to build three tabernacles and tarry in the mount when our Lord was thus tossed to and fro?

Beloved, you will certainly find that the world is established upon the floods, and is therefore ever moving. Never reckon upon the permanence of any joy, thank God, you need not dread the continuance of any sorrow. These things come and go, and go and come, and you and I, so far as we have to live in this poor whirling world, must be removed to and fro as a shepherd's tent, and find no city to dwell in. If this happen not to our habitations it will certainly happen in our feelings. From of old "the evening and the morning were the first day," and "the evening and the morning were the second day,"—the alternation of shade and shine, of setting and rising, are from the beginning. Dawn, noon, afternoon, evening, darkness, midnight, and a new morning follow each other in all things. So must it be, there is a needs be for clouds and showers, and morning glories, "until the day break and the shadows flee away," when we shall be fitted to bask in the beams of everlasting noon.

In the case before us we see Jacob in the best of company. Jacob, not cheated in Mesopotamia, but honored in Mahanaim; not trying to outwit Laban, but gazing upon celestial spirits. He was surrounded by angels and he knew it. His eyes were open, so that he saw spirits who in their own nature are invisible to human eyes. He became a seer, and was enabled by the inward eye to behold the hosts of shining ones whom God had sent to meet him.

It is a great privilege to be able to know our friends and to discern the hosts of God. We are very apt, indeed, to realize our difficulties, and to forget our helps, our allies are all around us, yet we think ourselves alone. The opposition of Satan is more easily recognized than the succor of the Lord. Oh to have eyes and hearts opened to see how strong the Lord is on our behalf.

Jacob had just been delivered from Laban, but he was oppressed by another load, the dread of Esau was upon him. He had wronged his brother, and you cannot do a wrong without being haunted by it afterwards. He had taken ungenerous advantage of Esau, and now, many, many years after it his deed came home to him, and his conscience made him afraid. Notwithstanding that he had lived with Laban so long, his conscience was sufficiently vigorous to make him tremble because he had put himself into a wrong position with his brother. Had it not been for this, he would have marched on to his father Isaac's tent with joyful foot.

Dreading his brother's anger, he was greatly distressed and troubled, these angels came to bring him cheer by helping him to forget the difficulties round about him, or lose his dread of them by looking up and seeing what defense and succor awaited him from on high. He had but to cry to God, and Esau's four hundred men would be met by legions of angels. Was not this good cheer? Have not all believers the same? Greater is He that is for us than all they that are against us.

If, this morning, I shall be enabled by the Holy Spirit to uplift the minds of the Lord's tried people from their visible griefs to their invisible comforts I shall be glad. I beg them not to think exclusively of the burden they have to carry, but to remember the strength which is available for the carrying of it. If I shall cause the timorous heart to cease its dread, and to trust in the living God who has promised to bear His servants through, I shall have accomplished my desire. The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge, and therefore no weapon that is formed against us shall prosper, and even the arch-enemy himself shall be bruised under our feet.

In treating of Jacob's experience at Mahanaim we will make a series of observations.

First, *God has a multitude of servants, and all these are on the side of believers.* "His camp is very great," and all the hosts in that camp are our allies. Some of these are visible agents, and many more are invisible, but none the less real and powerful. The great army of the Lord of hosts consists largely of unseen agents, of forces that are not discernible except in vision or by the eye of faith. Jacob saw two squadrons of these invisible forces, which are on the side of righteous men. "The angels of God met him," and he said, "This is God's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim (two camps)," for there a double army of angels met him.

We know that *a guard of angels always surrounds every believer*. Ministering spirits are abroad, protecting the princes of the blood royal. They cannot be discerned by any of our senses, but they are perceptible by faith, and they have been made perceptible to holy men of old in vision. These bands of angels are *great in multitude*, for Jacob said, “This is God’s host,” a host means a considerable number, and surely the host of God is not a small one. “The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels.” We do not know what legions wait upon the Lord, only we read of “an innumerable company of angels.” We look abroad in the world, and calculate the number of persons and forces friendly to our Christian warfare, but these are only what our poor optics can discover, the half cannot be told us by such means.

It may be that every star is a world, thronged with the servants of God, who are willing and ready to dart like flames of fire upon JEHOVAH’S errands of love. If the Lord’s chosen could not be sufficiently protected by the forces available in one world, He has but to speak or will, and myriads of spirits from the far-off regions of space would come thronging forward to guard the children of their King. As the stars of the sky, countless in their armies, are the invisible warriors of God. “His camp is very great.” “Omnipotence has servants everywhere.” These servants of the strong God are *all filled with power*, there is not one that faints among them all, they run like mighty men, they prevail as men of war.

A host is made up of valiant men, veterans, troopers, heroes, men fit for conflict. God’s forces are exceedingly strong, nothing can stand against them. Whatever form they take, they are always potent, even when God’s host is made up of grasshoppers, cankerworms, and palmerworms, as in the Book of Joel, none can resist them, and nothing can escape them. They devoured everything, they covered the earth, and even darkened the sun and moon. If such be the case with insects, what must be the power of angels? We know that they “excel in strength,” as they “do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.” Rejoice, O children of God! There are vast armies upon your side, and each one of the warriors is clothed with the strength of God.

All these agents work in order, for it is God’s host, and the host is made up of beings which march or fly, according to the order of command. “Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path.” All the forces of nature are loyal to their Lord. None of these mighty forces dreams of rebellion. From the blazing comet which flames in the face of the universe to the tiniest fragment of shell which lies hidden in the deepest ocean cave, all matter yields itself to the supreme law which God has settled. Nor do unfallen intelligent agents mutiny against divine decrees, but find their joy in rendering loving homage to their God. They are perfectly happy, because consecrated, full of delight, because completely absorbed in doing the will of the Most High. Oh that we could do His will on earth as that will is done in heaven by all the heavenly ones!

Observe that in this great host they were *all punctual to the divine command*. Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God *met* him. The patriarch is no sooner astir than the hosts of God are on the wing. They did not linger till Jacob had crossed the frontier, nor did they keep him waiting when he came to the appointed rendezvous, but they were there to the moment. When God means to deliver you, beloved, in the hour of danger, you will find the appointed force ready for your succor. God’s messengers are neither behind nor before their time, they will meet us to the inch and to the second in the time of need, therefore let us proceed without fear, like Jacob, going on our way even though an Esau with a band of desperadoes should block up the road.

Those forces of God, too, were *all engaged personally to attend upon Jacob*. I like to set forth this thought, “Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God *met him*,” he did not chance to fall in with them. They did not happen to be on the march, and so crossed the patriarch’s track, no, no, he went on his way, and the angels of God met him with design and purpose. They came on purpose to meet *him*, they had no other appointment. Squadrons of angels marched to meet that one lone man!

He was a saint, but by no means a perfect one, we cannot help seeing many flaws in him, even upon a superficial glance at his life, and yet the angels of God met *him*. Perhaps in the early morning, as he rose to tend his flocks, he saw the skies peopled with shining ones who quite eclipsed the dawn. The

heavens were vivid with descending lusters, and the angels came upon him as a bright cloud, descending, as it were, upon the patriarch. They glided downward from those gates of pearl, more famed than the gates of Thebes. They divided to the right and to the left and became two hosts. Perhaps the one band pitched their camp behind, as much as to say, "All is right in the rear, Laban cannot return, better than the cairn of Mizpah is the host of God." Another squadron moved to the front as much as to say, "Peace, patriarch, peace with regard to Esau, the red hunter, and his armed men, we guard you in the van."

It must have been a glorious morning for Jacob when he saw not one, but many morning stars. If the apparitions were seen in the dead of night, surely Jacob must have thought that day was come before its time. It was as if constellations mustered to the roll call, and clouds of stars came floating down from the upper spheres. All came to wait upon Jacob, on that one man, "The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear him," but in this case it was to one man with his family of children that a host was sent. The man himself, the lone man who abode in covenant with God when all the rest of the world was given up to idols, was favored by this mark of divine favor. The angels of God met *him*.

One delights to think that the angels should be willing, and even eager, troops of them, to meet one man. How vain is that voluntary humility and worshipping of angels which Paul so strongly condemns. Worshipping them seems far out of the question, the truth lies rather the other way, for they do us suit and service, "are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them that are the heirs of salvation?" They serve God's servants. "Unto which of the angels said he at any time, you are my son?" But this He has said, first to the Only-Begotten, and then to every believer in Christ. We are the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty, and these ministering ones have a charge concerning us, as it is written, "They shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone."

I have shown you that believers are compassed about with an innumerable company of angels, great in multitude, strong in power, exact in order, punctual in their personal attention to the children of God. Are you not well cared for, oh you sons of the Most High!

Those forces, though in themselves invisible to the natural senses, are manifest to faith at certain times. There are times when the child of God is able to cry, like Jacob, "The angels of God have met me." *When do such seasons occur?* Our Mahanaims occur at much the same time as that in which Jacob beheld this great sight. Jacob was entering upon a more separated life. He was leaving Laban and the school of all those tricks of bargaining and bartering which belong to the ungodly world. He had breathed too long an unhealthy atmosphere, he was degenerating, the heir of the promises was becoming a man of the world. He was entangled with earthly things. His marriages held him fast, and every year he seemed to get more and more rooted to Laban's land. It was time he was transplanted to better soil.

Now he is coming right away, he has taken to tent life. He has come to sojourn in the land of promise, as his fathers had done before him. He was now to confess that he was seeking a city, and meant to be a pilgrim till he found it. By a desperate stroke he cut himself clear of entanglements, but he must have felt lonely, and as one cast adrift. He missed all the associations of the old house of Mesopotamia, which, despite its annoyances, was his home.

The angels come to congratulate him. Their presence said, "You are come to this land to be stranger and sojourner with God, as all your fathers were. We have, some of us, talked with Abraham, again and again, and we are now coming to smile on you. You recollect how we bade you goodbye that night, when you had a stone for your pillow at Bethel? now you have come back to the reserved inheritance, over which we are set as guardians, and we have come to salute you. Take up the non-conforming life without fear, for we are with you. Welcome! Welcome! We are glad to receive you under our special care."

Then was it true to Jacob, "Verily I say unto you, there is no man that has left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, but he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this time, houses and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions, and in the world to come eternal life." This brotherhood of angels must have been an

admirable compensation for the loss of the fatherhood of that churlish Laban. Anything we lose when we leave the world, and what is called “society” is abundantly made up when we can say, “We have come unto the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven, and unto an innumerable company of angels.”

Again, the reason why the angels met Jacob at that time was, doubtless, because he was surrounded with great cares. He had a large family of little children, and great flocks and herds and many servants were with him. He said himself, “With my staff I crossed this Jordan, and now I am become two bands.” This was a huge burden of care! It was no light thing for one man to have the management of all that mass of life and to lead it about in wandering style. But see, there are two companies of angels to balance the two companies of feeble ones. If he has two bands to take care of, he shall have two bands to take care of him, if he has double responsibility he shall have double assistance.

So, brothers and sisters, when you are in positions of great responsibility, and you feel the weight pressing upon you, have hope in God that you will have double succor, and be sure that you pray that Mahanaim may be repeated in your experience, so that your strength may be equal to your day.

Again, the Lord’s host appeared when Jacob felt a great dread. His brother Esau was coming to meet him armed to the teeth, and as he feared, thirsty for his blood. In times when our danger is greatest, if we are real believers, we shall be especially under the divine protection, and we shall know that it is so. This shall be our comfort in the hour of distress. What can Esau do with his four hundred men now that the hosts of God have pitched their tents and have assembled in their squadrons to watch between us and the foe?

See you not the horses of fire and chariots of fire around about the chosen servant of God? Jacob ought to have felt calm and quiet in heart, I suppose he was while he saw his protectors. Alas! as soon as he lost sight of them, poor Jacob was depressed in spirit again about his brother Esau, lest he should slay the mothers with the children. Such is the weakness of our hearts! But let us not fall into the grievous sin of unbelief. Are we not without excuse if we do so? In times of great distress we may expect that the forces of God will become recognizable by our faith, and we shall have a clearer sense of the powers on our side than ever we had before. O Holy Spirit, work in us great clearness of spiritual sight!

And once again, when you and I, like Jacob, shall be near Jordan, when we shall just be passing into the better land, then is the time when we may expect to come to Mahanaim. The angels of God and the God of angels both come to meet the spirits of the blessed in the solemn article of death. Have we not ourselves heard of divine revealings from dying lips? Have we not heard the testimony so often, too, that it could not have been an invention and a deception? Have not many loved ones given us assurance of a glorious revelation which they never saw before? Is there not a giving of new sight when the eyes are closing?

Yes, O heir of glory, the shining ones shall come to meet you on the river’s brink, and you shall be ushered into the presence of the Eternal by those bright courtiers of heaven, who on either side shall be a company of dear companions when the darkness is passing, and the glory is streaming over you. Be of good cheer, if you see not the hosts of God now you shall see them hereafter, when the Jordan shall be reached, and you cross over to the promised land.

Thus I have mentioned the time when these invisible forces become visible to faith, and there is no doubt whatever that *they are sent for a purpose*. Why were they sent to Jacob at this time? Perhaps the purpose was first to revive an ancient memory which had well-nigh slipped from him. I am afraid he had almost forgotten Bethel. Surely it must have brought his vow at Bethel to mind, the vow which He made unto the Lord when he saw the ladder, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon it. Here they were, they had left heaven and come down that they might hold communion with him. I like the dream at Bethel better than the vision of Mahanaim for this reason, that he saw the covenant God at the top of the ladder. Here he only sees the angels. Yet there is a choice pearl in this latter sight, for whereas at Bethel he only saw angels ascending and descending, he here sees them on the earth by his side, ready

to protect him from all ill. How sweetly do new mercies refresh the memory of former favors, and how gently does new grace remind us of old promises and debts.

Brother, does not your Mahanaim point to some half-forgotten Bethel? Judge for yourself. Should our glorious God give you at this time a clear view of His divine power and of His covenant faithfulness, I pray that the sight may refresh your memory concerning that happy day when first you knew the Lord, when you first gave yourself up to Him, and His grace took possession of your spirit.

Mahanaim was granted to Jacob, not only to refresh his memory, but to lift him out of the ordinary low level of his life. Jacob, you know, the father of all the Jews, was great at huckstering, it was his very nature to drive bargains. Jacob had all his wits about him, and rather more than he should have had, well answering to his name of “supplanter.” He would let no one deceive him, and he was ready at all times to take advantage of those with whom he had any dealings. Here the Lord seems to say to him, “O Jacob, My servant, rise out of this miserable way of dealing with Me, and be of a princely mind.” Such should have been the lesson of this angelic visit, though it was ill-learned.

Jacob was prepared to send off to Esau and call him, “My Lord Esau,” he was ready to cringe and bow, and call himself his servant, amid all that. He went beyond the submissiveness which prudence suggests into the abject subjection which is born of fear. The vision should have led Jacob to stand upon higher ground. With bands of angels as his bodyguard, he had no need to persist in his timorous, pettifogging policy. He might have walked along with the dignified confidence of his grandfather Abraham. There is something better in this life after all than policy and planning, faith in God is grander far. A coward’s scheming ill becomes the favorite of heaven. Why should he fear who is protected beyond all fear? Esau could not stand against him, for JEHOVAH Sabaoth, the Lord of hosts, was on his side.

O for grace to live according to our true position and character, not as poor dependents upon our own wits or upon the help of man, but as grandly independent of things seen because our entire reliance is fixed upon the unseen and eternal. Jacob as a mere keeper of sheep has great cause to fear his warlike brother, but as the chosen of God and possessor of a heavenly guard he may boldly travel on as if no Esau were in existence.

All things are possible with God. Let us, then, play the man. We are not dependent on the things that are seen. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God shall man live. Cursed is he that trusts in man. Trust in God with all your heart. He is your infinite aid. Do the right, and give up calculations. Plunge into the sea of faith. Believe as much in the invisible as in the visible, and act upon your faith. This seems to me to be God’s objective in giving to any of His servants a clearer view of the powers which are engaged on their behalf.

If such a special vision be granted to us *let us keep it in memory*. Jacob called the name of that place Mahanaim. I wish we had some way in this western world, in these modern times, of naming places, and children, too, more sensibly. We must necessarily either borrow some antiquated title, as if we were too short of sense to make one for ourselves, or else our names are sheer nonsense and mean nothing. Why not choose names which should commemorate our mercies? Might not our houses be far more full of interest if around us we saw memorials of the happy events of our lives? Should we not note down remarkable blessings in our diaries to hand down to our children? Should we not tell our sons and daughters, “There God helped your father, boy,” “Thus and thus the Lord comforted your mother, girl,” “There God was very gracious to our family.” Keep records of your race! Preserve the household memoranda!

I think it is a great help for a man to know what God did for his father and his grandfather, for he hopes that their God will be his God also. Jacob took care to make notes, for he again and again named places by the facts which there were seen. Jacob named Bethel, and Galeed, and Peniel, and Mahanaim, and other places, for he was a great name giver. Nor were his names forgotten, for hundreds of years after good King David came to the same spot as Jacob, and found it still known as Mahanaim, and there the servants of God of another kind met him also.

This brings me to my second text, for angels did not meet David, but living creatures of another nature met him, who answered the purpose of David quite as well as angels would have done. So just for a few minutes we will dwell upon that second event which distinguished Mahanaim. Turn to the second book of Samuel, seventeenth chapter, twenty-seventh verse. David came to Mahanaim, and there was met by many friends. He stood upon the sacred spot, accompanied by his handful of faithful friends, fugitives like himself.

There was not an angel about that day apparently, yet secretly there were thousands flying around the sorrowing king. Who is this that comes? It is not an angel, but old Barzillai. Who is this? It is Machir of Lodebar. They bring with them honey, corn, butter, sheep, great basins by way of baths, and cooking utensils, and earthen vessels to hold their food, and look, there are beds too, for the poor king has not a couch to lie upon. These are not angels, but they are doing what angels could not have done, for Gabriel himself could hardly have brought a bed or a basin.

Who is yonder prominent friend? He speaks like a foreigner. He is an Ammonite. What is his name? Shobi, the son of Nahash, of Rabbah, of the children of Ammon. I have heard of those people, they were enemies were they not—cruel enemies to Israel? That man Nahash, you recollect his name, this is one of his sons. Yes! God can turn enemies into friends when His servants require succor. Those that belong to a race that is opposed to Israel can, if God wills it, turn to be their helpers. The Lord found an advocate for His Son Jesus in Pilate's house—the governor's wife suffered many things in a dream because of Him. He can find a friend for His servants in their persecutor's own family, even us He raised up Obadiah to hide the prophets and feed them in a cave, the chamberlain to Ahab himself was the protector of the saints, and with meat from Ahab's table were they fed.

It strikes me that Shobi the Ammonite came to David because he owed his life to him. Rabbah of Ammon had been destroyed, and this man, probably the brother of the king, had been spared, this act of mercy he remembered, and when he found David in trouble he acted gratefully and came down from his highland home with his men, and with his substance.

Many a good man has found gracious help in his time of need from those who have received salvation by his means. If we are a blessing to others they will be a blessing to us. If we have brought any to Christ, and they have found the Savior by our teaching, there is a peculiar tie between us, and they will be our helpers. Shobi of Rabbah of Ammon will be sure to be generous to David, because he will say, "It is by him I live; it is through him that I found salvation from death." If God blesses you in the conversion of any, it may be that He will raise them up in your time of need, and send them to help, at any rate, either by friends visible or invisible, He will cause you to dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed.

Here comes another person we have heard of before, Machir of Lodebar. That is the large farmer who took care of Mephibosheth. He seems to have been a truly loyal man, who stuck to royal families, even when their fortunes were adverse. As he had been faithful to the house of Saul so was he to David. We have among us brethren who are always friends of God's ministers, they love them for their Master's sake, and adhere to them when the more fickle spirits rush after new comers.

Happy are we to have many such adherents. They helped the preacher's predecessor, they like to talk of the grand old man who ruled Israel in the olden times, and they are not tired of it, but they are the entertainers of the present leader, and are equally hearty in their help. God fetches up these brethren at the moment they are wanted, and they appear with loaded hands.

Here comes Barzillai, an old man of fourscore, and as the historian tells us, "a very great man." His enormous wealth was all at the disposal of David and his followers, and "he provided the king of sustenance while he lay at Mahanaim." This old nobleman was certainly as useful to David as the angels were to Jacob, and he and his coadjutors were truly a part of God's forces. The armies of God are varied, He has not one troop alone, but many. Did not Elisha's servants see the mountain full of horses of fire, and chariots of fire? God's hosts are of varied regiments, appearing as horse and foot, cherubim and seraphim, and holy men and holy women. Those who are of the church of God below are as much a part

of the host of God as the holiest angels above. Godly women who minister unto the Lord do what they can, and angels can do no more.

On this occasion Mahanaim well deserved its name, because the help that came to David from these different persons came in a most noble way, as though it came by angels. The helpers of David showed their fidelity to him. He was driven out of his palace and likely to be dethroned, but they stood by him and proved that they meant to stand by him. Their declaration was in effect, “Yours are we, you son of Jesse, and all that we have.” Now was the time of his need, and now he would see that they were not fine weather friends, but such as were true in the hour of trial. See their generosity! What a mass of goods they brought to sustain David’s troops in the day when they were hungering and thirsting. I need not give you the details, your verses read like a commissariat roll of demands. Every actually necessary form of provision is there.

How spontaneous was the gift! David did not demand, they brought before he asked. He had not to send round his sergeants to levy upon the outlying villages and farms, but there were the good people ready-handed with all manner of provisions. Their thoughtfulness was great too, for they seem to have thought of everything that was wanted, and besides, they said, “The people are hungry and weary and thirsty in the wilderness.” The heartiness of it all is most delightful. They brought their contributions cheerfully and joyfully, else they would have brought after a meager sort, and with less variety of gifts.

I infer from this that if at any time a servant of God is marching onward in his Master’s work, and he needs assistance of any sort, he need not trouble about it, but rest in the Lord, for succor and help will surely come, if not from the angels above, yet from the church below. Will you look at Solomon’s Song, sixth chapter and thirteenth verse, “Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon you. What will you see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of two armies,” or *Mahanaim*, for that is literally how it stands in the Hebrew. In the church of God, then, we see the company of Mahanaim, the saints are the angels of God on earth as the angels are His hosts above. God will send these upon His errands to comfort and sustain His servants in their times of need. Go on, O David, at the bidding of your Lord, for His chosen servants here below will count it their delight to be your allies and you shall say of them, “This is God’s host!”

And now, to close. While I have shown you God’s invisible agents, and God’s visible agents, I want to call to your mind that in either case, and in both cases, *the host is the host of God*, that is to say, the true strength and safety of the believer is his God. We do not trust in the help of angels, we do not trust in the church of God, nor in ten thousand churches of God put together, if there were such, but in God Himself alone. Oh, it is grand to hang on the bare arm of God, for there hang all the worlds. The eternal arm is never weary, nor shall those who rest on it be confounded. “Trust you in the LORD forever, for in the LORD JEHOVAH there is everlasting strength.”

I said last Thursday night to you that faith was nothing but sanctified common sense, and I am sure it is so. It is the most common sense thing in the world to trust to the trustworthy, the most reasonable thing in the world to take into your calculations the greatest power in the world, and that is God, and to place your confidence in that greatest power. Yea, more, since that greatest power comprehends all the other powers—for there is no power in angels, or in men, except what God gives them, it is wise to place all our reliance upon God alone.

The presence of God with believers is more certain and constant than the presence of angels or holy men. God has said it—“Certainly I will be with you.” He has said again, “I will not leave you, nor forsake you.” When you are engaged in Christ’s service you have a special promise to back you up—“Go you into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature; and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” What are you afraid of then? Begone all trembling. Let feeble hearts be strong. What can stagger us? “*God is with us.*” Was there ever a grander battle cry than ours—the Lord of hosts is with us? Blessed was John Wesley to live by faith, and then to die saying, “The best of all is, God is with us.” Shrink? Turn your backs in the day of battle? Shame upon you! You cannot, if God be

with you, for “if God is with us, who can be against us?” Or if they are against us, who can stand for an hour?

If, then, God is pleased to grant us help by secondary causes, as we know He does—for to many of us He sends many and many a friend to help in His good work—then we must take care to see God in these friends and helpers. When you have no helpers, see all helpers in God; when you have many helpers, then you must see God in all your helpers. Herein is wisdom. When you have nothing but God, see all in God: when you have everything, then see God in everything. Under all conditions stay your heart only on the Lord. May the Spirit of God teach us all how to do this.

This tendency to idolatry of ours, how strong it is. If a man bows down to worship a piece of wood or stone, we call him an idolater, and so he is, but if you and I trust in our fellow men instead of God, it is idolatry. If we give to them the confidence that belongs to God, we worship them instead of God. Remember how Paul said he did not consult with flesh and blood, alas, too many of us are caught in that snare. We consult far more with flesh and blood than with the Lord. The worst person I ever consult with at all is a person who is always too near me. The Lord deliver me from that evil man, myself. The presence of the Lord Jesus is the star of our night and the sun of our day, the cure of care, the strength of service, and the solace of sorrow. Heaven on earth is for Christ to be with us and heaven above is to be with Christ.

I can ask nothing better for you, brethren, than that God may be with you in a very conspicuous and manifest manner all through this day, and right onward till days shall end in the eternal day. I do not ask that you may see angels, still, if it can be, so be it. But what is it, after all, to see an angel? Is not the fact of God’s presence better than the sight of the best of His creatures? Perhaps the Lord favored Jacob with the sight of angels because he was such a poor, weak creature as to his faith, perhaps if he had been perfect in his faith he would not have needed to see angels. He would have said, “I need no vision of heavenly spirits, for I see their Lord.”

What are angels? They are only God’s pages to run upon His errands, to see their Lord is far better. The angels of God are not to be compared with the God of angels. If my confidence is in Him that He is my Father, and that Jesus Christ has become the brother of my soul, and that the Holy Spirit dwells in me according to His own Word, what need I care, although no vision of the supernatural should ever gladden my eyes? Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed. “We walk by faith, not by sight,” and in that joyous faith we rest, expecting that in time and to eternity the power of God will be with us, either visibly or invisibly, by men or by angels. His arm shall be lifted up for us, and His right arm shall defend us.

My heart is glad for I too, have had my Mahanaim, and in this my hour of need for the work of the Lord to which He has called me, I see the windows of heaven opened above me, and I see troops of friends around me. For the Orphanage now to be commenced I see providence moving. Two camps are around me also, and therefore do I preach to you this day of that which I have seen and known. May the angel of the covenant be ever with you. Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
GENESIS 31:43-55, 32:1-2, 2 SAMUEL 17:27-29, PSALM 23**

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—708, 34, 674

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